

Looking Out for Shipmates Is All-Hands Job

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On any given day, families are hoping and praying their loved ones will return home from deployment, a temporary duty assignment, or from war. Let's face it: Being in the military can have its consequences. Plenty of risks exist on the job, but Sailors get hurt and killed other ways, too.

Sailors on USS *Theodore Roosevelt* must take safety seriously, whether on the job or off. "We rarely see injuries to people while doing their actual duties on the ship," said HMC Michael Felton. "Why? Because Sailors know the safety rules for their jobs. It's usually the non-working time, while doing something like transiting a passageway, playing around in berthing, or exercising on the hangar bay, when injuries occur."

"Safety first, and keep your head on a swivel" are phrases *TR* Sailors hear frequently. What do they mean? You must pay attention to your surroundings all the time. A ship at sea is one of the most dangerous environments anywhere; everything around the crew is unforgiving.

"With all the work being done around the deck plates, it's important to maintain situational awareness," said YN2 Courtney M. Hart of the safety department. "You always have to be prepared for the unexpected."

"Complacency is one of the leading contributors to injuries," Hart continued. "Sailors doing the same job day in and day out get into a routine and start feeling like nothing will

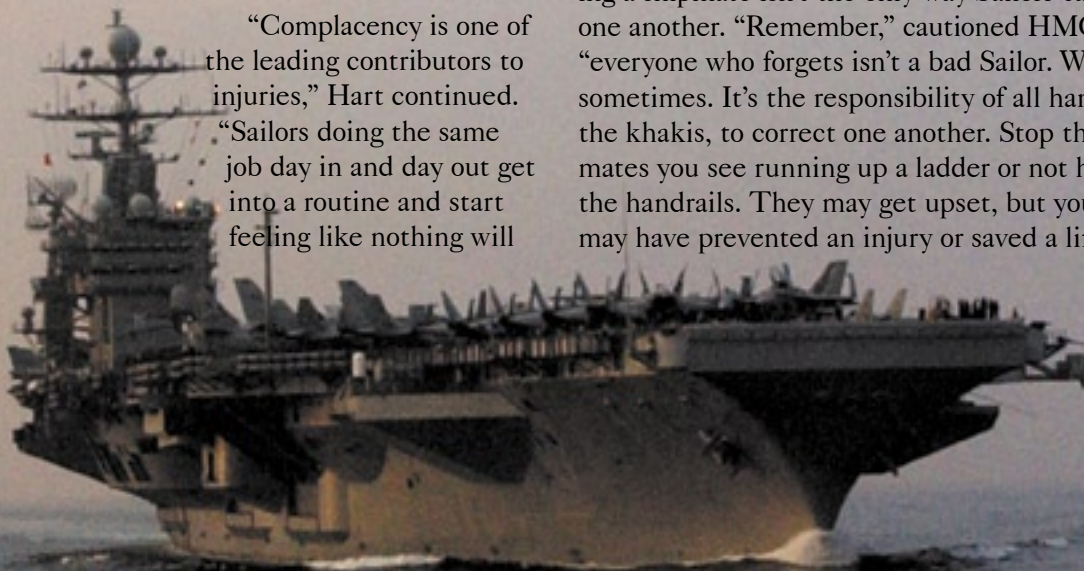
happen. This over-confidence leads to rushing, cutting corners, and making mistakes."

It's then that something as simple as transiting a passageway or climbing a ladder can become life-threatening. "One of the major issues we see in the safety office," explained Hart, "is people rushing up and down the ladders without holding the handrails or sliding down the rails to the next level."

"Now that we're well into our current deployment," added HMC Felton, "some of our junior troops think they have their 'sea legs' and have started slacking. It's now that we most often hear 'medical emergency, medical emergency' called away over the 1MC."

What kinds of injuries occur aboard ship? "On the lighter side, everything from bleeding lacerations to blunt traumas and bruises," according to Felton. "On the moderate side, we have bad sprains, strains and back injuries. Broken bones, dislocated hips and shoulders, and, recently, a fractured vertebra, round out our serious injuries. So far, we've been lucky; none of our shipmates have died."

Safety often is as simple as paying attention and getting help from another shipmate, but just helping a shipmate isn't the only way Sailors can help one another. "Remember," cautioned HMC Felton, "everyone who forgets isn't a bad Sailor. We all forget sometimes. It's the responsibility of all hands, not just the khakis, to correct one another. Stop those shipmates you see running up a ladder or not holding onto the handrails. They may get upset, but you very well may have prevented an injury or saved a life." ■



Navy photo by JO3 Joe Burgess